

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 028836
ORIGIN EB-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 OIC-02 IO-14 CCO-00 CIAE-00
OTPE-00 FCC-02 INR-07 NSAE-00 OC-06 USIA-15
COME-00 BIB-01 /068 R

DRAFTED BY EB/TD;ALFREEMAN:PB
APPROVED BY EB/TCA:JWBILLER
EB/TD:RHPHILLIPS
OTP:WFISHMAN
FCC:RCROWELL
IO/TRC:WDIAMANTI
EUR/NE:JPSHUMATE
IO/OIC:CODELL (INFO)
-----024905 031224Z /10
R 030148Z PEB 78
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY LONDON

UNCLAS STATE 028836

FOR CLAY BLACK

E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: ETEL, UK

SUBJECT: MARITIME SATELLITE COMMUNICATIONS - INMARSAT

REF: LONDON 18029 (NOV. 2, 1977)

EMBASSY REQUESTED TO PASS FOLLOWING MESSAGE TO MR. K. R.
THACKER, BRITISH POST OFFICE:

DEAR MR. THACKER:

I HAVE BEEN INFORMED OF YOUR TELEX DATED JANUARY 20 SENT
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TO ALL INMARSAT PREPARATORY COMMITTEE MEMBER STATES AND
OBSERVERS, INVITING THEIR PARTICIPATION AT A CONFERENCE TO
BE HELD IN BOURNEMOUTH, ENGLAND, FROM APRIL 10-14 FOR THE
PURPOSE OF NEGOTIATING AN AGREEMENT TO BE THE BASIS FOR
THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A GLOBAL COMMERCIAL MARITIME COMMUNI-
CATIONS SATELLITE SYSTEM TO FOLLOW THE EXISTING MARISAT

SYSTEM.

THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT IS FULLY AWARE OF AND HAS INTERPOSED NO OBJECTION TO THE MARISAT JOINT VENTURE'S PARTICIPATION IN THE EXPLORATORY TALKS WHICH HAVE PRECEDED THIS CONFERENCE, AND WE DO NOT NOW OBJECT TO THEIR FURTHER PARTICIPATION, AS PRIVATE BUSINESS ENTITIES, IN

TALKS INTENDED TO CLARIFY THE OPPORTUNITIES THAT MIGHT EXIST FOR A JOINT UNDERTAKING TO PROVIDE FOLLOW-ON SERVICE UPON THE EXPIRY OF THE CURRENT GENERATION OF MARISAT SATELLITES. HOWEVER, WE BELIEVE IT IS IMPORTANT THAT ALL PARTIES UNDERSTAND THE POSITION OF THE U.S. GOVERNMENT IN THIS MATTER.

THE UNITED STATES BELIEVES PROVISION SHOULD BE MADE FOR A MARITIME COMMUNICATIONS SATELLITE CAPABILITY TO PROVIDE CONTINUITY OF MARITIME SATELLITE SERVICE BEYOND THE CURRENT MARISAT SYSTEM. TO THIS END, WE BELIEVE IT IS PRUDENT TO EXPLORE ALL PRACTICABLE ALTERNATIVES. WE LOOK UPON THE TALKS AMONG THE MARISAT JOINT VENTURE, INTERIM EUTELSAT, THE EUROPEAN SPACE AGENCY, AND OTHERS, AS POSSIBLY LEADING TO ONE SUCH ALTERNATIVE, AND BELIEVE FURTHER CLARIFICATION OF THE PROPOSED BUSINESS ARRANGEMENT TO BE DESIRABLE.

HOWEVER, WE MUST STRESS WHAT WE UNDERSTAND THE MARISAT
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JOINT VENTURE PARTNERS HAVE STATED AT THEIR SEVERAL MEETINGS WITH THE OTHER PARTIES TO THESE DISCUSSIONS, I.E., THAT ANY BUSINESS ARRANGEMENT THEY MIGHT MUTUALLY AGREE UPON WOULD, INsofar AS UNITED STATES PARTICIPATION WAS INVOLVED, NECESSARILY BE SUBJECT TO U.S. GOVERNMENT APPROVAL. CONSIDERATIONS RELATIVE TO U.S. POLICY DETERMINATIONS REGARDING MARITIME SATELLITE COMMUNICATIONS SERVICE ARE CURRENTLY UNDER REVIEW WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT, INCLUDING THE DETERMINATION OF AN ENTITY TO REPRESENT

U.S. INTERESTS IN ANY FUTURE MARITIME SATELLITE SYSTEM.

IN CONCLUSION, I WISH TO REITERATE OUR VIEW THAT EXAMINATION OF VARIOUS ALTERNATIVES SHOULD PROCEED. HOWEVER, THE PARTIES TO THE DISCUSSIONS SHOULD UNDERSTAND THAT THE U.S. GOVERNMENT IS NOT ITSELF PREPARED TO NEGOTIATE A DEFINITIVE ARRANGEMENT, NOR IS IT PREPARED TO AUTHORIZE ANY PARTICULAR ENTITY TO DO SO, AT THIS TIME. FURTHER DISCUSSIONS WITH THE MARISAT JOINT VENTURE SHOULD THEREFORE BE UNDERSTOOD TO BE OF A PURELY PRIVATE NATURE, HAVING NO OFFICIAL STATUS INsofar AS THE U.S. IS

CONCERNED, AND NO SPECIFIC GOVERNMENTAL DETERMINATION
SHOULD BE INFERRED. I HOPE THESE VIEWS WILL BE HELPFUL
IN CLARIFYING OUR POSITION, AND PLACING IN PERSPECTIVE
THE PARTICIPATION OF THE MARISAT JOINT VENTURE IN
FURTHER DISCUSSIONS.

SINCERELY YOURS,

JOEL W. BILLER, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY
FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND COMMERCIAL AFFAIRS. VANCE

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*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a

*** Current Classification *** UNCLASSIFIED

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: COMMITTEE MEETINGS, COMMUNICATION SATELLITES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 03 feb 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 jan 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978STATE028836
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: PB
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: n/a
Errors: n/a
Expiration:
Film Number: D780051-1342
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t197802111/aaaafgfx.tel
Line Count: 129
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON MICROFILM, TEXT ON-LINE
Message ID: 9b449cce-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN EB
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 LONDON 18029
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29 mar 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3455259
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CORRECTED> gwr 970813
Subject: MARITIME SATELLITE COMMUNICATIONS - INMARSAT
TAGS: ETEL, UK, ETEL, INMARSAT
To: LONDON
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/9b449cce-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014